PATTERNS OF POWER · CASE STUDY · IRAN

The Absent Imam and the Present Guard

Iran from the Safavid Imposition to the Coming Succession — How an Interpreter Class Holding a Credential No Shah Could Issue Overthrew a State, Became One, and Made Its Own Qualification Revocable in the Process

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

Preface: what this study is

The collaboration, the case, and the promise that it stands alone.

This study belongs to the Patterns of Power project and is a collaboration. The questions, the direction, the case selection and the final judgement are the author's; the historical synthesis, the drafting and the scholarly retrieval were done with Claude, Anthropic's model, with every load-bearing claim checked against a source before anything was built on it. The method is declared because it is a new way of making knowledge and ought to be visible rather than concealed.

The project asks one question of particular historical orders: how does a distribution of holdings taken by force become an arrangement that armed men will defend rather than contest? How does a warlord's camp become a country? It applies a framework built across some three dozen cases, and it treats the cases that **break** the framework as worth more than the ones that confirm it.

Iran is chosen because it stresses the framework at four separate joints at once, and because on one of them the framework's prediction has not yet landed and may be wrong.

It is the clearest case in the whole corpus of an interpreter class whose qualification was issued **outside any ruler's reach** — geographically outside the country, financially outside the treasury, and conferred by a following rather than by an office. The framework predicts that such a class can constrain the apex, and it did, more spectacularly than anywhere else in the archive. Then that class **captured the state** — and in doing so converted its own credential from foreign to domestic, which the framework predicts should destroy the very capacity that made the capture possible. It did.

It is also the case in which a source of political rightfulness was **visibly manufactured** by a named man within living memory, attacked at the time as an innovation by nearly every senior figure in his own tradition, and has nonetheless run for forty-seven years. The framework says visible manufacture fails. Part X takes that seriously rather than explaining it away.

It contains a **guard theorem** running in real time, with a regular army that evaporated without a battle in February 1979 and a parallel force built specifically because it had.

And it contains the sharpest single instance the project has of an anchor being **edited to fit a claimant** — a constitutional qualification removed, by referendum, seven weeks after the man who failed it had already been installed.

The study stands alone. No prior reading is assumed — not of this project, not of Iranian or Islamic history, and not of any scholar or doctrine named. Shi'i institutions are built up from the beginning in plain words. Every technical term is defined at first use.

One discipline governs throughout. The subject includes a monarchy maintained by a secret police, a revolution followed by mass executions, a war that killed hundreds of thousands, and a state that has shot its own citizens in the street within the last four years. To explain a mechanism is never to defend what it did. This project states that obligation in the phrase *legibility is not pardon*, and discharges it in Part XI rather than in a clause.

The puzzle

A telegram from Ottoman territory that emptied a shah's palace of tobacco.

In December 1891 a religious scholar living in Samarra — a town in Ottoman Iraq, outside Iran, outside the Shah's jurisdiction, outside any Iranian institution's reach — issued a ruling that Iranians should stop smoking.

He commanded no soldiers. He held no office in the Iranian state. He had no ability to punish anybody in Iran for anything.

Within weeks the boycott was universal. Bazaars closed across the country. Non-Muslims observed it. It was reliably reported that the Shah's own wives and household servants refused to smoke inside his palace. On 5 January 1892 Naser al-Din Shah revoked the tobacco concession he had granted to a British company — at a cost of half a million pounds in damages and further sums in compensation, on a treasury that could not afford it.

Now the puzzle in the form the framework asks it. The Shah had an army, a treasury and a state. Mirza Hasan Shirazi had a following and a reputation. Why did the Shah lose?

The obvious answer — that Iranians were devout — explains nothing, because devout populations obey their rulers everywhere else in the record. The Ottoman sultan was Commander of the Faithful over an equally devout population and never faced anything of the kind; nor did the Chinese emperor, nor the Mughal, nor any Catholic monarch after his own church became national.

The framework's answer is specific and it organises this entire study: **Shirazi held a credential the Shah could not issue and could not revoke.** He was qualified by other scholars and by the voluntary following of laymen; he was funded by religious dues paid directly to him by believers rather than by any treasury; and he lived in another empire. There was no lever.

Eighty-seven years later, men holding that same credential took the state.

And the question this study is really about is what happened to the credential afterwards — because an interpreter who becomes the apex is no longer outside the contest, and the framework says that changes everything.

The framework, compressed

Possession, ownership, the anchor, the interpreter, and the floor.

Everything below rests on a distinction ordinary speech collapses.

Possession is what force holds now. It is entirely present-tense and expires when the capacity sustaining it expires — at illness, at absence, and completely at death.

Ownership is a claim about the future and about other people: that this will be mine tomorrow while I sleep, and that when I die you will treat my son as its holder. Ownership is not a relation between a person and a thing. It is a structure of expectations about how other people will behave across time.

Force is sovereign over the first and impotent over the second. **The part of a holding that force cannot reach is exactly what distinguishes ownership from possession, and it must therefore be manufactured out of something that is not force.** Read "a holding" broadly: an office, a rank, a throne, a standing.

The coordination failure

Everyone in a world of armed men would prefer a settlement, and that explains nothing, because the question is why any settlement holds when breaking it would pay. The decisive calculation is not the aggressor's but the **bystanders'**: each asks whether a seizure is his quarrel, and absent a common ground of title the honest answer is no — intervening buys casualties and an enemy, and intervening alone makes him the next target. So everyone waits, each knowing the others reason identically, and that shared expectation of inaction is what makes the seizure safe.

Warlordism is a coordination failure among the men who might have punished it, not a moral failure.

The anchor

Suppose instead that every holding draws its rightfulness from one source. The arithmetic inverts: letting a seizure stand establishes that holdings may be taken, which is a fact about *his* holding, and he can predict the others are computing the same thing. Call that source the **anchor**. It works on expectations rather than on wills — a man abstains not because he believes but because he can count.

From which the condition that organises this study: **a party competing for the spoils cannot be the author of who gets them**, because a title granted by a competitor is a forecast about that competitor's health. So the anchor must be **unforgeable by the current claimants**. And the danger is not principally that a strong man breaks the rule — breaking is legible and the coalition punishes it — but that he **changes** it, because rule-change does not trigger the coalition at all.

A working anchor must also be **determinate** (one answer to who holds this and who comes next), **common knowledge** (everyone knows it, knows the others know it), and **attached to an office rather than a man**.

The interpreter, and his two jobs

An anchor does not read itself. Somebody says what it requires, and that class exists for structural reasons: specialisation divides knowing as well as labour, so in any complex society each person must delegate most of what he holds to sources he cannot check, and a position appears between the many and what they cannot reach.

That class does **two separable jobs**, and this is the finding on which the study turns.

The vertical job is telling the apex no — refusing him, denying him, declaring an act unlawful. It requires that the apex cannot revoke the interpreter's standing.

The horizontal job is making every powerful man's title checkable against one source, so that an attack on any of them registers with all of them. It requires only that the interpreter be **singular** — not brave, not independent.

Capture destroys the first almost immediately and leaves the second intact. Which is why bought clergies are compatible with centuries of stability, and why an order dies not when the priest is bought but when a **second author of title** appears.

And the measurable variable is **where the credential is issued**. *Fused*, where the claimant is his own interpreter. *Domestic*, where the ruler appoints, examines, licenses or funds. *Foreign*, where the qualification comes from outside every domestic claimant's reach — which is the only position in which restraint is possible, because it is the only one in which a refusal can be survived.

The floor

An anchor says who is right and does not enforce itself. The **floor** is the coercive capacity that makes verdicts land — and it is not bedrock. An army is a set of armed men each of whom could refuse, so it has the same coordination problem one scale down, with its own anchor: the oath, the standard, the chain of command, the

paymaster. **The floor is a second settlement nested inside the first**, and it can evaporate without a battle when the forecast changes.

What matters about a floor is **what its obedience is addressed to**: to a man, to an office, or to a ground. And the theorem that follows: a ruler who builds a force recruited from people the existing order does not command gets one no priest can turn against him — and thereby creates the one armed body outside the coalition that punishes seizures. **A guard that the anchor cannot turn against you is a guard the anchor cannot turn back.**

Part I — The landscape: an imposed anchor that took

Nobody found empty ground, including in 1501.

This project has found, in every case it has examined, that the order standing on the ground before a conquest was itself a former conquest that had become the shape of the world for the people inside it. Iran is a clean instance and the fact bears directly on 1979, because the anchor Khomeini used was imposed by a warlord four and a half centuries earlier.

The Safavid imposition

Iran before 1501 was religiously mixed and predominantly Sunni. In that year Ismail I, leader of a militant Sufi order at the head of Turkmen tribal cavalry, took Tabriz and declared **Twelver Shi'ism** the religion of his new state — a conversion carried out over the following century by import of scholars, endowment of seminaries, patronage, pressure and force.

Twelver Shi'ism holds that authority over the Muslim community passed from the Prophet to a line of twelve divinely-appointed Imams, and that the twelfth of them did not die but entered **occultation** — concealment — in the ninth century, remaining alive and hidden, and will return at the end of time to fill the earth with justice.

Hold that fact, because it is the strangest and most important feature of this entire case.

The rightful ruler of the Shi'i community is a living person who is absent. Which means the anchor scores, on the framework's four properties, in a configuration nothing else in the corpus matches. **Unforgeable: absolutely** — no man can be the Hidden Imam, no conquest confers it, no state can appoint one, and there is nothing to capture, buy or kill. **Common knowledge: total. Attached to a person rather than an office** — but a person who cannot die, which converts the usual weakness into a strength. And **determinate about the ruler and radically indeterminate about who acts for him in his absence**, which is the entire history of Shi'i political thought and the crack through which everything in this study travels.

By the twentieth century nobody in Iran experienced any of this as an arrangement. It was the furniture of reality — which is precisely what a build that has taken looks like, and precisely what makes the recursion invisible from inside.

The interpreter class assembles itself

The second thing the landscape supplies is the institution that would eventually take the state, and it was not designed by any ruler.

Across the eighteenth century Shi'i scholarship settled a long internal dispute in favour of the school holding that qualified jurists may exercise independent reasoning — *ijtihad* — on questions the texts do not settle directly, and that ordinary believers must therefore follow a living qualified jurist in matters of religious practice. The follower is a *muqallid*; the practice is *taqlid*, emulation.

From that, across the nineteenth century, emerged the office of **marja' al-taqlid** — "source of emulation," the most senior rank of Shi'i clerical authority, a jurist whom large numbers of believers choose to follow.

Now note carefully how a man becomes one, because this is the study's central mechanism.

Nobody appoints him. There is no election, no investiture, no chair conferred by a state or a synod. A jurist becomes a *marja'* through scholarly reputation among his peers, the number and quality of students he trains, and — decisively — **the number of ordinary believers who choose to follow him and to send him their religious dues.** The credential is issued from below and sideways, by a following and by a guild, over decades.

There is no lever on it. A shah cannot make a *marja'*, cannot unmake one, cannot appoint a rival to the post because there is no post, and cannot even reliably identify who the next one will be.

And nobody paid them

The second half is financial, and it is what makes the first half operational.

Shi'i religious dues, *khums*, are divided into portions, one of which — the *sahm-e Imam*, the Imam's share — is understood to belong to the Hidden Imam and is therefore paid, in his absence, to the jurist the believer follows, who spends it on seminaries, students, stipends and charity.

Consider what that is, structurally. **A tax-collecting system, voluntary, running directly from millions of laymen to a scholarly class, with no state in the circuit at any point.** The seminaries at Qom, Najaf and Karbala were funded by it. Students

lived on it. And no Iranian government could interrupt it, because it did not pass through any institution a government held.

The scoring

Put those together and the pre-revolutionary Iranian clergy score, on the framework's variable, at the far end and in every respect at once.

Geographically foreign. The senior seats of Shi'i learning were Najaf and Karbala, in Iraq — under Ottoman and then Iraqi sovereignty. The most influential jurists frequently lived outside Iran, and the Tobacco ruling was issued from Samarra.

Financially independent. Funded by *khums* paid directly by believers.

Credentialled by following. Made by peers and laymen, not by any office.

The framework's prediction for a foreign credential is that **the vertical function is live** — that refusals become possible, because they can be survived. Part II is what that looked like.

Part II — The credential the state could not issue

What a live vertical function looks like, and the one instance in the corpus that outdoes Canossa.

The framework's control case for the vertical function has been the Investiture Contest — an emperor waiting in the snow at Canossa in 1077 for absolution from a pope he could not appoint, dismiss or defund. The explanation offered was structural rather than moral: the credential lived in a foreign office, so refusal could be survived.

Iran supplies a stronger instance, and it is stronger in exactly the way the framework predicts, because the Iranian credential was foreign on *three* axes rather than one.

The Tobacco Protest as a diagnostic

In March 1890 Naser al-Din Shah granted a British major a fifty-year monopoly over the production, sale and export of Iranian tobacco. Protests began in Shiraz in 1891 and spread; a leading cleric was exiled from Shiraz to Iraq for preaching against the concession; demonstrations in Tabriz were severe enough that the Shah suspended the concession there.

Then, in December 1891, a ruling attributed to **Mirza Hasan Shirazi**, the pre-eminent jurist of the age, resident in Samarra, declared tobacco use tantamount to **war against the Hidden Imam**.

Read that formula through the framework. It does not invoke the jurist's own authority. It invokes the anchor directly and places the smoker on the wrong side of it — which is the horizontal mechanism operating on an entire population at once: the question is no longer whether you personally object to a tobacco concession, but whether you will be seen standing against the ground everyone else stands on.

The compliance was universal and, more revealingly, **it reached inside the palace**. The Shah's own wives and servants stopped. The Shah cancelled on 5 January 1892, paying damages that deepened a fiscal crisis he had granted the concession to relieve. And when he had cancelled, the crowds waited for word from Samarra before resuming, which is the sharper datum: **they treated the jurist's permission, not the Shah's announcement, as the thing that ended it.**

What the framework says about this

This is the vertical function at full strength, and the diagnostic runs cleanly.

Could the Shah punish the man who refused him? No. Shirazi was in Ottoman territory, was funded by Iranian believers directly, and held no office the Shah had given.

Could the Shah appoint a rival? No — there was no post to fill, and a state-appointed *marja'* would have had no emulators, since emulation is chosen by the emulator.

Could the Shah outbid him? No, and this is the deepest point. What the jurist held was not a resource that could be bought but a **position in other people's expectations**. The Shah could have offered him anything; the offer would not have transferred the following.

Note also what the episode was *not*. It was not the clergy governing. Shirazi did not claim the right to rule and did not attempt it. He exercised a veto and stopped. The traditional Shi'i position, held by most jurists for most of the period, was **quietist**: in the absence of the Imam no government is fully legitimate, the jurist's authority is religious and juridical rather than political, and the proper posture toward a shah is at most supervision from outside. That distinction — veto without rule — is the thing Khomeini would later abolish, and Part IV is about the abolition.

And it recurred

The pattern was not a single event. In the **Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11**, clerical authority was again decisive in mobilising against the Qajar state, though the clergy split over what to demand — a genuinely instructive split, since some jurists supported a constitution and an elected assembly while others held that man-made legislation usurped divine law, and the dispute was between men none of whom the state could discipline.

By the framework's account, then, Iran entered the twentieth century with a highly unusual configuration: a state with a floor, and an interpreter class that was **outside** that state, financially independent of it, credentialled by a following, and demonstrably able to make a shah reverse himself.

Part III — The Pahlavi attempt, and what survived it

A century of capture that reached everything except the one institution it needed to reach.

The Pahlavi shahs understood the problem and worked on it for fifty years. What they achieved, and what they failed to achieve, is the framework's clearest demonstration of why credential distance matters.

What Reza Shah reached

Reza Khan, an army officer who took power after a 1921 coup and had himself crowned in 1925, built a centralising state on an explicitly secular-nationalist model. Judicial functions passed from religious courts to state courts. Education passed from seminary-adjacent schools to a state system. Religious endowments came under state supervision. The clergy's dress was regulated; in 1936 the veil was banned outright and enforced by police. Clerical numbers fell and clerical public role contracted sharply.

He was, in the framework's terms, doing exactly what a ruler does to an interpretive class: converting a foreign credential into a domestic one by taking the functions that gave it purchase.

What he could not reach

He could not reach the credential itself, and the reason is the structure of Part I. A *marja'* was made by a following and by a guild of scholars, funded by voluntary dues, and often resident abroad. There was no appointment to withhold, no salary to stop, no examination to set, and no chair to abolish.

So the institution went quiet and did not go away — and the seminary at **Qom**, reorganised in 1922, continued to train the men who would later matter, on money the state did not control.

And here is the finding that governs 1979. Across the middle of the twentieth century Mohammad Reza Shah — restored to full power by the Anglo-American coup of 1953 that removed the nationalist prime minister Mosaddegh, and increasingly reliant on the SAVAK security service — dismantled or neutralised every organised alternative to himself. Political parties were banned, permitted only as regime creations,

and finally in 1975 replaced by a single mandatory party. The nationalist and left oppositions were broken, imprisoned or driven underground. The press was controlled.

Every one of those institutions held a credential the Shah could reach.

The mosque network was the single organised structure in Iran whose authority the state did not issue, and it survived — not because it was tolerated, and not because it was more courageous, but because there was no instrument. Which is a general finding worth stating plainly, and it is one of this study's contributions to the framework:

> ***A capture campaign selects for institutions with foreign credentials.*** *A ruler who dismantles every rival that holds standing from him will discover, at the end, that the only surviving organised opposition is the one that never did — and he will have concentrated the whole opposition into it.*

The break: 1963

The confrontation came over the **White Revolution**, a reform programme announced in 1963 including land redistribution, which struck at religious endowments, and votes for women, which was opposed on religious grounds.

A comparatively junior figure in Qom, **Ruhollah Khomeini**, attacked the programme and the Shah in unprecedented terms. He was arrested in June 1963; protests followed and were put down with heavy loss of life. He was released, resumed, and in 1964 attacked a bill granting American military personnel legal immunity in Iran, and was exiled.

One detail from that year is worth the whole of Part II compressed into a sentence. Khomeini's life was in danger, and other senior clerics — including **Shariatmadari**, then the leading figure at Qom — moved to have him publicly recognised as a **Grand Ayatollah**, on the understanding that a *marja'* could not lawfully be executed. He was exiled instead: to Turkey, then to **Najaf**, in Iraq, where he remained until 1978.

The credential the state could not issue was the thing that prevented the state from killing him. And the state's response was to expel him into the very seat of the foreign credential, where he taught for thirteen years.

Part IV — The manufacture

What Khomeini built in Najaf, what it was built out of, and who called it new.

In 1970, in Najaf, Khomeini delivered a series of lectures published as *Islamic Government* and known by the name of their doctrine: **velayat-e faqih**, the guardianship of the jurist.

The claim

The argument, compressed: the Hidden Imam is absent, but the community's need for government does not go into occultation with him. The functions of the Imam — governing, judging, collecting and disbursing, commanding — must be exercised by somebody. Islamic law is a complete legal system requiring an executive. Therefore, in the Imam's absence, those functions devolve upon the qualified jurist, who holds the Imam's authority in trust. And therefore clerical rule is not a departure from Shi'ism but its requirement, and monarchy is a usurpation.

What it was built out of

The framework says an anchor's raw material cannot be manufactured but can be **assembled**, provided the assembly is presented as recovery. Both halves are visible here.

The material was genuinely pre-existing. The Hidden Imam's authority is not Khomeini's invention. And the technical basis of the extension is an established doctrine — the jurist's *guardianship* over those who cannot manage their own affairs: orphans, the insane, the property of absent persons, unclaimed estates. That guardianship was uncontroversial and centuries old. What Khomeini did was **extend it by analogy from persons who cannot act for themselves to the community as a whole**.

And it was presented as recovery, not innovation: as the restoration of what Shi'ism had always required and had been prevented from exercising by tyranny.

And the hostile witnesses said it was new

The framework's test for distinguishing a found ground from a made one is: **did the order's enemies, at the time, attack the source of title as an innovation?** Enemies

have every incentive to say *he invented this last year* if he did, and to attack on some other ground if he did not.

Iran gives the most decisive result the test has produced anywhere, and it goes against the doctrine.

Velayat-e faqih was rejected by nearly all of Khomeini's fellow scholars. Before the revolution, essentially the only senior jurist to endorse it was **Montazeri**, Khomeini's own student. The senior figure at Najaf, **Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei** — the pre-eminent Shi'i jurist of the age and himself resident in Iraq — rejected it outright. **Shariatmadari**, the leading figure at Qom, rejected it, on the ground that clerical rule is not required by Islam and that vesting sovereignty in a jurist by divine right nullifies the sovereignty of the people. Sustained criticism came from the clergy of Mashhad for years after 1979. And the senior jurists at Najaf have remained opposed ever since, including the most followed *marja'* of the present era, who has held that Iran's Leader has no authority over Shi'a outside Iran.

The substantive objection is worth recording because it names the analogy and refuses it: extending the jurist's guardianship from orphans and the insane to the general public **puts sane adults in the category of those who cannot act for themselves.**

So the hostile-witness test returns a clear verdict. **This was manufacture, it was visible as manufacture at the time, and it was called so by the most senior people in the tradition it claimed to be recovering.**

By the framework, that should have failed. It did not. Part X takes the failure of the prediction seriously; the intervening parts establish what happened instead.

And the assembler was the beneficiary

One further scoring, because it matters for everything after 1989.

The framework's weakened thesis permits deliberate assembly — provided the assembler is **not the beneficiary** of the distribution the anchor authorises. The nineteenth-century philologists and folklorists who assembled national traditions were not the men who would rule the resulting states, and the framework holds that this separation is what carried nationalism.

Khomeini authored the doctrine and became the Guardian.

That is the proviso violated as plainly as the record permits, and the framework's expectation is fragility — not necessarily in the founder's lifetime, since a founder's personal standing can carry an order a long way, but **at the first transfer**, when the doctrine must qualify somebody who did not write it.

Part VIII is that transfer.

Part V — 1978: the clock, and the floor that evaporated

A coordination machine built out of a mourning calendar, and an army that stopped without being defeated.

The machine

On 7 January 1978 a state-controlled newspaper published an article attacking Khomeini. The next day seminary students protested in **Qom** and security forces opened fire, killing an uncertain number.

What followed is the purest instance of coordination technology in this project's archive, and it was not designed by anyone.

Shi'i custom marks the fortieth day after a death with a public mourning ceremony. So the deaths at Qom produced, forty days later on **18 February**, commemorations across the country — the largest at Tabriz, where a mosque closure produced a clash, a death, and a riot that burned the ruling party's headquarters and left more dead. Those deaths produced, forty days later at the end of March, commemorations in dozens of cities, and further deaths at Yazd. Those produced another round in May. Participants called it *doing the forty-forty*.

Read it through the framework and it is a **self-clocking common-knowledge machine**. The project's account of ceremony holds that ritual works not by transmitting a message to each person but by letting each person see everyone else receiving it — and the forty-day cycle does something no ordinary ceremony does. It **schedules the next occasion automatically**, in advance, on a date every participant can calculate, in a form the state could not ban without banning mourning itself. Each round's casualties set the date of the next. Every Iranian knew when the next one was and knew that every other Iranian knew.

And it ran on the one organisational network the Shah had not been able to dismantle, for the reason given in Part III. The mosques were not merely a place to gather. They were the **only surviving institution with a credential the state did not issue**, which is why they were still standing when everything else had been broken, and why the revolution took the shape it did rather than a nationalist or leftist shape.

The floor

By late 1978 the Shah had an army of some four hundred thousand men, the most sophisticated arsenal in the region, and a security service with a fearsome reputation. On **11 February 1979** the Imperial Iranian Army declared itself **neutral**, and the monarchy ended.

There was no defeat. There was no decisive battle. Units did not lose; they stopped.

The framework's account of the floor covers this exactly. An army is a set of armed men each of whom could refuse, so obedience is a forecast each soldier makes about the others; a force collapses when that forecast changes, and it can change overnight, without casualties, in men who are neither cowards nor traitors. What the framework adds is the diagnostic question — **what was that obedience addressed to?**

The Imperial Army's was addressed to the monarchy and substantially to the Shah's person: he had built it, promoted through it, appointed its senior officers, and cultivated it as his own instrument. Which made it maximally reliable *while the monarchy was the focal point* and gave it nothing to fall back on when the monarchy ceased to be. Conscripts confronted crowds invoking a ground the conscripts themselves held. Officers could not answer for their men. And once enough of them believed the others would not fire, none of them would.

The Shah's floor did not lose a war. It lost a forecast.

Part VI — The settlement, and what it authored

A referendum, a constitution, and a question the new order had to answer immediately.

Khomeini returned on 1 February 1979. In March a referendum approved an Islamic Republic. Through the year an Assembly of Experts drafted a constitution, and in December 1979 it was ratified.

What was installed

The constitution installed velayat-e faqih as the state's organising principle: a **Leader**, holding ultimate authority, above the elected president and parliament, commanding the armed forces, appointing the head of the judiciary, and appointing half the **Guardian Council**, a body empowered to strike down legislation as un-Islamic and — decisively for what came later — to vet candidates for elected office.

Score that against the framework and the crucial fact is not that it was theocratic. It is that **the office of Leader made the interpreter into a claimant.**

For four centuries the Shi'i jurist's authority had been unforgeable by any Iranian ruler precisely because the jurist was not a ruler. He held no office the state conferred, drew no salary the state paid, and was frequently outside the country. The 1979 constitution took the most senior interpreter in the country and made him the apex of the state.

The framework's prediction is immediate and unambiguous. **A source of title that acquires a floor becomes a competitor, and a competitor's word is worth his army.** The project has one prior instance in exactly this shape — the Abbasid caliphate, powerless for centuries and destroyed within seventeen years of the single occasion on which it raised an army of its own — and the mechanism is the same: powerlessness was not the puzzle but the qualification.

The vertical function ends

The consequence arrived within three years and it arrived in the form the framework specifies.

Shariatmadari was the most senior *marja'* in Iran, a man with a large following in Azerbaijan, who had publicly opposed velayat-e faqih on the ground that it curtailed popular sovereignty, and who had boycotted the constitutional referendum. His associated party was crushed after a rising in Tabriz and then dissolved. In 1982 he was implicated in an alleged plot, stripped of his clerical rank — an act without precedent in Shi'i practice, since the rank had never been in any state's gift — and spent his remaining years under house arrest until his death in 1986.

The state defrocked a source of emulation. Four hundred years of a credential no ruler could touch, ended by an administrative act.

And it was systematised. A **Special Court for the Clergy** was established under the Leader's authority to try clerics. Friday prayer leaders across the country became appointees of the Leader's office. Seminary funding was progressively drawn into state channels. The office of Leader itself came to control vast endowed foundations.

> ***The revolution converted the Shi'i clerical credential from foreign to domestic**, and in doing so destroyed the vertical function that had made the clergy the only institution in Iran capable of resisting a shah.*

The framework's prediction for a domestic credential is not silence but a specific signature: **heroic individual refusals and no institutional capacity to compel.** That is precisely the post-1979 record. Montazeri — the designated successor, and after 1989 among the most senior jurists alive — objected to mass executions and to the direction of the state, was dismissed, spent years under house arrest, and changed nothing. Others have objected since and changed nothing. There has been no successful clerical veto of a Leader in forty-seven years, in the one country on earth whose clergy had a documented history of vetoing its ruler.

And the horizontal function

Meanwhile the other job ran. Every office in the new state — the presidency, the parliament, the judiciary, the armed forces, the foundations — derived its standing from one place, and the Guardian Council's vetting power ensured that nobody entered the political class except through that source. Which is single authorship in the framework's sense, and it is why the order has been internally coherent rather than factionalised into rival authorities, despite intense factional conflict *inside* it.

The pattern is the framework's standard one, arriving on schedule: **capture destroyed restraint and left coordination intact.**

Part VII — The new floor

A guard built because the last one evaporated, and the theorem running in real time.

The new order had watched an army stop obeying, and drew the correct conclusion.

Why the Artesh could not be used

The Imperial Army had declared neutrality rather than joining the revolution, which is not the same thing as being reliable to the men who won. It was purged heavily in the immediate aftermath, and it was never trusted, because its address had been the monarchy and the revolutionary leadership had no way to be sure the address had genuinely changed rather than merely gone quiet.

Khomeini declined to dissolve it — against pressure from several quarters — and it was given a chance to prove itself when Iraq invaded in September 1980. But it could not be the new order's floor.

The Pasdaran

In the spring of 1979 the revolutionary militias that had appeared during the collapse were unified by decree into the **Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami** — the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, formally established in May 1979.

Every feature of it is the guard theorem's recruitment criterion.

Recruited from people the old order did not command. Not from the officer corps, the military academies or the conscript pool of the imperial army, but from the neighbourhood committees, the mosque networks and the young men of the revolution — that is, from exactly the population that had no standing in the institution being replaced.

Screened for ideology rather than for professional qualification, which is the same criterion stated positively: what was being purchased was not competence but the absence of an alternative address.

And addressed, constitutionally, to the revolution rather than to the state. The 1979 constitution assigns the regular army responsibility for the country's independence and territorial integrity, and assigns the Guard the duty of **guarding the**

Revolution and its achievements — two forces, two different objects of obedience, written into the same document.

In November 1979 a mass volunteer force, the **Basij**, was added beneath it.

The two-floor architecture, and its drift

Iran has therefore run, for forty-seven years, the architecture the framework identifies as recurring and unstable in one direction: a ground-addressed regular army alongside a guard addressed to the Leader and the revolution, with the apex the only party in communication with both.

The framework's prediction is that such an arrangement **drifts one way only**. In a crisis the apex uses the force he trusts, so it grows; every increment reduces his need for the other, which he then has less reason to fund or favour; and no apex has a motive to strengthen the force that could be turned against him at the expense of the force that cannot.

The Iranian record fits the prediction closely enough to be uncomfortable. The Iran–Iraq war of 1980–88 expanded the Guard enormously in size, structure and prestige. Post-war reconstruction gave it an economic base through its engineering arm, and from there it expanded into construction, energy, telecommunications and import channels on a scale that makes it a major economic actor in its own right. It acquired its own ground, naval and aerospace branches, the missile programme, and a foreign-operations arm. It has supplied presidents, ministers, governors and parliamentarians. Its budget, access and recruitment advantages over the regular army are well documented. And when the question of merging the two forces was raised in the Iranian press in 2026 — after decades in which it was not discussable — the obstacle identified was constitutional rather than administrative, since the Guard's mandate and its binding to the Leader are written into the document itself.

The clock

The framework's guard theorem has a generational clock attached, and its mechanism is precise: **the moment a guard acquires a base, it stops being a body with nowhere else to stand and becomes a lineage — and a lineage is a claimant.** The Janissaries are the dated instance: forbidden marriage, property and trade expressly so they should leave no descendants; permitted to marry in 1566; hereditary within two generations; deposing and killing a sultan in 1622 for proposing to restore the original prohibitions.

The Iranian Guard was granted its base deliberately, in the post-war period, as reconstruction policy and as reward. Forty-seven years on, it has property, industry, families, a second generation, and an economic interest in the continuation of a specific arrangement rather than in the abstract survival of a revolution.

The framework does not predict a coup, and this study will not either. What it predicts is narrower and more checkable: **that an armed body with an independent economic base ceases to be a pure instrument and becomes a party whose consent is required**, and that its relationship to the apex therefore inverts gradually from service to negotiation. Whether that has already happened in Iran is a live scholarly dispute; the framework's contribution is to say what to look for, which is not disloyalty but **the emergence of decisions the apex cannot take against the Guard's interest**.

Part VIII — 1989: the anchor edited to fit the claimant

The sharpest instance in the corpus of a rule changed rather than broken.

The framework holds that the great danger to a settlement is not the man who breaks the rule but the man who **changes** it, because rule-change does not trigger the bystander coalition. Iran supplies the cleanest documented example available anywhere, performed by the order on itself, in the space of four months.

The qualification that could not be conferred

The 1979 constitution required that the Leader be a **marja'-e taqlid** — a source of emulation.

That requirement was not decoration. It was the one clause that kept the anchor **foreign to the state**, because a *marja'* is made by the scholarly guild and by a lay following and cannot be appointed by anybody. Under the original article, the man at the apex of the Iranian state had to hold a qualification the Iranian state could not issue.

That is the framework's condition for legitimacy stated in constitutional language — and it was, by some distance, the most important sentence in the document.

The sequence

Montazeri, Khomeini's designated successor and the only senior jurist who had endorsed velayat-e faqih before the revolution, fell out with him over the direction of the state and over the mass executions of political prisoners in 1988, and was removed from the succession in the spring of 1989.

That left a problem with no solution inside the rules. The senior *marja'* of the day had given at best lukewarm support to velayat-e faqih itself; a genuinely qualified source of emulation who believed in the doctrine and could hold the state together did not exist.

On 24 April 1989, from his deathbed, Khomeini appointed a council to revise the constitution. He died on 3 June. On **4 June** the Assembly of Experts selected **Ali**

Khamenei — then the president, and a middle-ranking cleric who was **not a marja'**. A senior *marja'* was proposed first, received few votes, and was passed over.

On **28 July 1989**, by referendum, the constitution was amended. Among the changes, Article 109 was rewritten: the requirement that the Leader be a source of emulation was removed and replaced with a lower standard of juristic scholarship together with political and administrative perspicacity.

They chose the man on 4 June and amended the qualification on 28 July. It remains the only time the constitution of the Islamic Republic has been amended.

What the framework says about this

Three things, and they compound.

First, this is rule-change rather than rule-breaking, and it drew no coalition. Nobody was deposed, no law was violated, and the procedure was impeccable — a council appointed by the founder, a vote in the Assembly, a referendum with an overwhelming majority. Which is precisely why nothing formed against it. The bystander mechanism is keyed to violations of the ground and has nothing whatever to say about a lawful alteration of the ground.

Second, it is the anchor's catchment being edited, and the framework has seen this move before. In 1758 the Qianlong emperor, facing a Mongol office whose holder could also be a Chinggisid dynast, decreed that all future incarnations of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu must be found in Tibet — leaving doctrine, monasteries and authority untouched and changing only **the rule about where the next holder may come from**. That is the cheapest intervention in the corpus and it worked for a hundred and fifty years.

The finding it produced is the one that applies here: **a credential filled by procedure is unforgeable at the level of the individual and capturable at the level of the rule.** Nobody can arrange to be a *marja'*; but the *requirement* that the Leader be one was written in a constitution, and a constitution has an author, and whoever controls the amendment procedure controls the eligibility.

And third, this is the moment the credential finished becoming domestic. Before 28 July 1989 the qualification for the apex was conferred by the seminary and the emulators. After it, the qualification was whatever the constitution said, and the constitution was in the hands of the order it governed. The last structural remnant of the arrangement that had defeated Naser al-Din Shah in 1892 was removed by amendment.

There is one further detail that completes the picture, and it is the framework's expenditure tell running in reverse. In the years after 1989, considerable effort went

into promoting the new Leader's standing as a religious authority — and the effort was conspicuously more successful outside Iran than within Qom, where his seniority has never been generally accepted by the senior clerical establishment. **An order that must campaign for its apex's credential has conceded that the credential was not conferred by the body that confers it.**

Part IX — What the framework predicts about the next succession

Stated as predictions, not as forecasts of events.

The Leader installed in 1989 is now in his late eighties. The framework does not predict outcomes and it does predict **what the failure modes are and what to watch**, which is the useful form.

The selecting body is authored by the man being succeeded. The Assembly of Experts selects the Leader. Candidates for the Assembly are vetted by the Guardian Council. Half the Guardian Council is appointed by the Leader, and the other half is approved by a judiciary head the Leader appoints. So the body that authors the next Leader is, at one remove, authored by the current one.

The framework's language for this is exact and it is the founding prohibition applied to succession: **a party competing for the outcome cannot be the author of who gets it.** A succession decided by a body the incumbent constituted is not an anchor performing its function; it is an incumbent choosing, with a procedure attached. It works while the incumbent is alive to give it coherence, and it is untested in his absence.

The determinacy problem is present in its standard form. The anchor specifies qualifications rather than a person, which means it names a *pool* and requires a procedure to select within it — and the project's survey of succession solutions finds three families: eliminate the claimants, select among them by rule, or dissolve the coalitions that would form behind them. Iran uses the second, with a body the framework has just described as compromised.

The floor's address is the variable to watch. The Guard's constitutional mandate binds it to the revolution and to the Leader, not to the state or to a procedure. That address is unambiguous while there is a Leader. It is undefined during an interregnum — and the framework's finding is that an armed body with an independent economic base ceases to be an instrument and becomes a party whose consent is required. What to watch is not a coup but whether the succession can be concluded **without the Guard's agreement**, and if not, whether the Assembly's decision is the cause or the ratification of it.

And the doctrinal fork is unrepaired. The most senior jurists of the Shi'i world have never accepted velayat-e faqih, and their seat is Najaf — which is to say, the foreign

credential still exists, is still outside Iranian reach, and is now held by people who reject the Iranian state's founding doctrine. The framework's finding on forks is that they are repairable only by an outside power with a floor plus a donation of legitimacy from inside a corporate body, and that neither is available here. **The Islamic Republic did not win the argument with the seminaries. It governed without winning it**, and the unwon argument is a standing asset for any future claimant who wants one.

Falsifiable versions. If the framework is right, the succession should be settled by the security apparatus and the incumbent's own network rather than by clerical seniority, and the successor should be selected for reliability rather than for religious standing — repeating 1989 rather than departing from it. If instead a genuinely senior *marja'* is chosen on the strength of clerical authority and the Guard accommodates itself to him, the framework's reading of Iran is wrong and the doctrine has taken more deeply than this study allows.

Part X — What it shows, and where it strains

Including the prediction that has not landed.

What the case gives the framework

A stronger control case than Canossa. The Tobacco Protest is the vertical function demonstrated with a credential foreign on three axes at once — geographic, financial and conferential — and the result was more complete than any European instance: not an emperor humiliated but a policy reversed, at ruinous cost, with compliance inside the ruler's own household.

A general finding about capture campaigns. A ruler who dismantles every rival institution will, at the end, have concentrated the entire opposition into whichever institution holds a credential he cannot reach. The Pahlavi state broke the parties, the press and the secular oppositions, and could not break the mosque network — which is why the revolution that removed it was religious rather than nationalist or left. That is a new statement of the credential variable and it belongs in the framework.

A coordination technology the corpus did not have. The forty-day mourning cycle is a common-knowledge machine that **schedules its own next occurrence**, in advance, calculably, in a form the state could not prohibit without prohibiting mourning. The project's account of ritual has been static — ceremony as a device for letting each person see the others see. This is ceremony with a clock, and each round's casualties set the next date.

And a documented instance of the anchor's catchment being edited. The 1989 amendment is the framework's rule-change danger in its purest form: lawful, procedurally impeccable, coalition-free, and fatal to the one clause that kept the apex's qualification outside the state's gift.

Where it strains, and the prediction that has not landed

The manufacture prediction has not come true, and forty-seven years is a long time.

The framework holds that visibly manufactured grounds fail: Diocletian's sacralisation, Henry VIII's Supreme Headship demoted by his own daughter, Akbar's

attestation dying with him. Velayat-e faqih was manufactured by a named man in the 1970s, attacked at the time as an innovation by the pre-eminent jurists of the tradition, and it has organised a state for nearly half a century, through a war, a founder's death, sanctions, mass protest movements and open conflict with major powers.

Four possible readings, and I do not know which is right.

One: it is not yet a test. Forty-seven years is one succession. The project's own standard is that an order is tested at transitions, and this one has had a single transfer, managed by the founder from his deathbed. On that reading the case is pending rather than contrary.

Two: the floor is doing the work. An order that must shoot its own citizens to remain in place — 2009, 2019, 2022 — is not demonstrating that its ground has taken; it is demonstrating the opposite, and the framework's own measure of a settlement is cheapness. On this reading the doctrine failed and the Guard has been substituting for it, which is consistent with everything in Part VII.

Three: the weakened thesis is satisfied. The material was not invented — the Hidden Imam's authority and the jurist's guardianship over those unable to act for themselves are both centuries old — and the doctrine was presented as recovery rather than as innovation. On this reading the framework's amended claim covers the case and only the strong claim fails.

Four: the framework is wrong about visible manufacture. Perhaps a ground can be built inside living memory, over the objection of the tradition's own authorities, provided the builder captures the state and holds it long enough for a generation to grow up inside the result. That would be a serious finding against the origin argument, and it should not be dismissed because it is inconvenient.

I lean toward a combination of the second and the third, and I want to record that the second proviso — **the assembler was the beneficiary** — is the framework's best-supported prediction here and did land: the doctrine could not qualify its own second holder, and the qualification had to be lowered to fit him.

Other strains, stated plainly.

Oil. Iran is a rentier state, and a state funded by a resource does not need its population's consent to be funded. The framework handles this badly. Its own related finding — that a rent is attached to the ground and transfers to whoever takes the wellhead, while a subsidy is attached to a person the payer chooses — implies that Iran's revenue makes the state a **prize worth seizing**, which is a confound running through every claim in this study about why the order has held.

Sanctions and external threat. A besieged order is cheap to hold for reasons that have nothing to do with its anchor, since external threat manufactures cohesion. Forty-seven years of confrontation is a large uncontrolled variable.

The mass audience is not measured here. This study has scored the elite settlement carefully and has almost nothing to say about what ordinary Iranians believe, which the framework says is the difference between an order that is cheap and one that is expensive. Protest waves suggest one answer and turnout in some elections suggests another, and I do not have an instrument that resolves it.

And the survivorship problem applies as always. This is a study of an order that exists, written from sources it did not suppress, at a moment when its succession has not yet occurred. Everything here is provisional in the specific way the project's own epistemics require.

Part XI — The excluded, and the discipline

Who paid for each stage of this.

This project requires every study to name the people who were inside an order's coercive reach and outside its settlement, because that is where the violence concentrates.

Under the monarchy the excluded were everyone the security service reached: the imprisoned, the tortured, the exiled, the students shot at Qom in January 1978 and at Tabriz in February and at Yazd in March, and the crowds killed in Tehran in September 1978. The framework's account of the Pahlavi capture campaign as an efficient dismantling of rival institutions is a description of what was done to human beings who ran those institutions.

In the settlement that followed the excluded were, first, the revolution's own coalition. The leftist and nationalist organisations that had helped bring down the monarchy were suppressed within three years; the Kurdish and other minority movements were put down militarily; and in 1988 several thousand political prisoners, many already serving sentences, were executed after summary hearings — the act over which Montazeri objected and lost his position. The Baha'i community, which holds no place in the constitutional order at all, has been subject to sustained persecution throughout.

In the war the framework's clean sentence about the Guard expanding in size and prestige between 1980 and 1988 describes a conflict that killed hundreds of thousands of people, in which very young volunteers were used in ways their families were not consulted about.

And in the decades since, the excluded are the people the Guard and the Basij were built to police: the demonstrators of 2009, of 2019, and of the movement that followed the death in custody of Mahsa Amini in 2022, together with the women on whom the compulsory dress code is enforced, who are the population against whom the order's coercive capacity is most routinely used.

On the vocabulary. This study has called human beings a *following*, a *mass audience*, a *floor* and a *coalition*, and has described a mourning cycle as a *coordination machine*. That register is chosen because vagueness about mechanism has protected

more atrocity than it has prevented, and because a state is easier to excuse when it cannot be described. But the register makes suffering sound like a variable, and the debt should be paid once in plain language.

The forty-day cycle was not a machine. It was families burying their children and then, forty days later, burying more. The prisoners executed in 1988 were not the price of a settlement's consolidation. Shariatmadari, whose recognition of Khomeini as a Grand Ayatollah in 1964 is cited in this study as an elegant demonstration of credential distance, saved the life of the man whose state would later strip him of his rank and hold him under house arrest until he died.

Legibility is not pardon. To explain why an order persecutes efficiently is to say something about the order's design and nothing whatever in its defence.

Conclusion

What the interpreter lost by winning.

For four centuries the Shi'i clergy of Iran held something almost nothing else in this project's archive has held: a credential no ruler could issue and no ruler could revoke. It was conferred by a guild and a following rather than by an office. It was funded by dues that passed directly from believers to scholars with no state in the circuit. And its senior seats were in another country. There was no lever.

The framework says that a foreign credential is the only position from which an interpreter can tell an apex no and survive it, and Iran is the strongest confirmation in the corpus. In December 1891 a jurist in Ottoman Samarra invoked the Hidden Imam against a tobacco concession and emptied the Shah's own palace of tobacco, and the Shah cancelled at a cost that helped bankrupt him — and the crowds waited for the jurist's permission, not the Shah's, before resuming.

It also says that a capture campaign selects for exactly such institutions. The Pahlavi state broke the parties, the press, the nationalists and the left, and could not break the seminaries, because there was nothing to appoint, defund or abolish. So when the order came apart in 1978 it came apart along the only organised channel left standing, on a mourning calendar the state could not prohibit, and the army that should have stopped it did not lose a battle — it lost a forecast, and stopped.

And then the interpreter became the apex, which is the one thing the position cannot survive.

Velayat-e faqih was a manufactured claim: assembled from real materials, presented as recovery, and rejected as innovation by nearly every senior jurist in the tradition, including the pre-eminent figure at Najaf and the leading figure at Qom. Its author became its first beneficiary, which is the framework's clearest violation of the one proviso that lets a deliberate assembly work. And within three years the new state had done to a *marja'* what four hundred years of shahs could not: **stripped him of a rank the state had never been able to confer**, and gone on to build a clerical court, a system of appointed prayer leaders, and a seminary economy inside the state's reach.

The last structural remnant went in 1989. The constitution had required the Leader to be a source of emulation — the single clause keeping the apex's qualification outside the state's gift — and when the only man available for the office did not hold it, the clause was removed. Seven weeks after he had already been installed. Lawfully, by

referendum, and therefore without anything forming against it, because **the bystander mechanism is keyed to broken rules and has nothing to say about changed ones.**

What remains is an order whose horizontal function works — a single author of title, one channel into the political class, factional conflict entirely contained inside a single source of standing — and whose vertical function does not exist, in the one country whose clergy had a documented history of vetoing its ruler. What restrains the apex now is not a jurist. And beneath it stands a guard recruited, by design, from people the old order did not command, addressed constitutionally to the revolution rather than to the state, and in possession for three decades of an industrial base its founders did not intend it to have.

The framework's sentence for that arrangement was written for a different century and applies without amendment. **A guard that the anchor cannot turn against you is a guard the anchor cannot turn back.**

Which leaves the question the succession will answer. An order that must edit its own eligibility rule to produce a successor has told us where its authorship really sits, and an order whose selecting body is appointed at one remove by the man being succeeded has no anchor performing that function at all — only an incumbent, choosing, with a procedure attached. The Islamic Republic did not win its argument with the seminaries. It governed without winning it. **And the argument is still there, in Najaf, outside anybody's reach — which is exactly where the last one was in 1891.**

A note on sources and scholarship

Every borrowed idea is explained in the text rather than invoked on authority; this note gives the references and the reservations.

On the framework. Possession and ownership, the anchor and its four properties, the bystander mechanism, the interpreter class and its two functions, credential distance, the floor as a nested settlement and the guard theorem are developed across this project's theoretical papers — principally *What Force Cannot Do*, which consolidates them, together with *The Shape of the Sieve*, *The Distance to the Sword*, *No Empty Ground*, *What the Conqueror Cannot Author* and *The Guard That Cannot Be Turned*. The underlying scholarship restated in the compressed framework is James D. Fearon on commitment problems (*International Organization*, 1995), Barry R. Weingast on coordination and shared standards (*American Political Science Review*, 1997), and Michael Suk-Young Chwe on public ritual as a generator of common knowledge (*Rational Ritual*, 2001). The horizontal application among armed peers is this project's extension.

On Twelver Shi'ism and the clerical institution. The occultation of the twelfth Imam, the Usuli settlement establishing *ijtihad* and *taqlid*, the emergence of the *marja' al-taqlid* in the nineteenth century, and the *khums* and *sahm-e Imam* system of religious dues follow the standard reference literature. The characterisation of the *marja'* as made by peer reputation and lay following rather than by appointment, and of the resulting financial independence from the state, is the settled scholarly account and is the load-bearing structural fact of this study.

On the Safavid conversion. Ismail I's declaration of Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion on taking Tabriz in 1501, and the century-long process of conversion by import of scholars, endowment, patronage and force, follow the standard accounts.

On the Tobacco Protest. The concession granted to Major G. F. Talbot in March 1890; protests from Shiraz and Tabriz through 1891; the December 1891 ruling attributed to Mirza Hasan Shirazi, resident in Samarra in Ottoman Iraq, declaring tobacco use tantamount to war against the Hidden Imam; the universal observance including within the Shah's household; the crowds' waiting for Shirazi's word rather than the Shah's before resuming; and the revocation of 5 January 1892 with damages of £500,000 and further compensation, were checked against the standard reference accounts for this study. Nikki Keddie's *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco*

Protest of 1891–92 remains the standard treatment. Note that the fatwa's authorship has been questioned in some accounts and it is often described as *attributed* to Shirazi and later confirmed by him; the study's argument does not depend on the resolution of that question, since what it requires is that the ruling was obeyed and that its author was beyond the Shah's reach.

On the Pahlavi period. Reza Shah's judicial, educational and endowment reforms and the 1936 unveiling; the reorganisation of the Qom seminary in 1922; the 1953 coup and its consequences; the White Revolution of 1963, Khomeini's arrest and the June 1963 uprising, the capitulations bill of 1964 and his exile to Turkey and then Najaf, follow the standard literature, principally Ervand Abrahamian's *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (1982). The episode in which Shariatmadari and others moved to have Khomeini recognised as a Grand Ayatollah in order to protect him from execution follows the standard accounts, which derive it from Iranian sources.

On velayat-e faqih and its reception. Khomeini's Najaf lectures of 1970, published as *Hokumat-e Eslami / Islamic Government*; the doctrinal basis in the jurist's guardianship over those unable to manage their own affairs; and the rejection of the doctrine by nearly all senior contemporaries — including Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei at Najaf and Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari at Qom, with Montazeri as the principal pre-revolutionary exception — follow the standard literature and were checked for this study. Shariatmadari's objection that clerical rule is not required by Islam and that vesting sovereignty in a jurist nullifies popular sovereignty, and the wider objection that the doctrine places sane adults in the legal category of those who cannot act for themselves, are reported as the substance of the contemporary criticism.

On 1978–79. The *Ettela'at* article of 7 January 1978 and the Qom protest of 9 January; the forty-day commemorative cycle running through Tabriz on 18 February, Yazd at the end of March and further rounds in May; the mobilisation of the mosque and bazaar network; and the Imperial Army's declaration of neutrality on 11 February 1979 followed by heavy purges, follow the standard accounts, principally Charles Kurzman's *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (2004), from which the forty-day sequence and the participants' own phrase for it are taken, together with Abrahamian. Casualty figures for individual episodes vary widely between sources and are not relied on here.

On the constitution and the institutions. The March 1979 referendum, the Assembly of Experts, and the December 1979 constitution establishing the Leader, the Guardian Council and its vetting power; the establishment of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps by decree in the spring of 1979 and formally in May, and of the Basij in November 1979; Article 143 assigning the regular army responsibility for

independence and territorial integrity and Article 150 assigning the Guard the duty of guarding the Revolution and its achievements; and the Special Court for the Clergy, follow the constitutional text and the standard reference literature.

On Shariatmadari's demotion. His public opposition to velayat-e faqih and his boycott of the constitutional referendum; the suppression of the associated party after the Tabriz rising; the 1982 allegation of complicity in a plot; his stripping of clerical rank and death under house arrest in 1986, follow the standard accounts. The unprecedented character of the demotion — a state removing a rank the state had never conferred — is this study's characterisation and is the framework's central point about the case.

On 1989. Montazeri's removal from the succession in the spring of 1989; Khomeini's appointment of a constitutional revision council on 24 April; his death on 3 June; the Assembly of Experts' selection of Khamenei on 4 June after a senior *marja'* was proposed and passed over; and the referendum of 28 July 1989 amending Article 109 to remove the requirement that the Leader be a *marja'-e taqlid*, replacing it with a lower standard of juristic scholarship together with political and administrative perspicacity — the only amendment to the constitution to date — were checked against the standard reference accounts for this study. Saïd Amir Arjomand's *After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors* (2009) is the standard treatment of the transition. The exact date of Montazeri's dismissal letter is disputed between sources and is given here as the spring of 1989.

On the Guard's expansion. The Iran–Iraq war's effect on the Guard's size and standing; its post-war acquisition of an economic base through its engineering arm; its separate ground, naval and aerospace branches, missile programme and foreign-operations arm; and its budgetary, recruitment and access advantages over the regular army, follow the standard analytical literature, including work by Ali Alfoneh and the Middle East Institute. The 2026 press discussion of merging the two forces, and the identification of Articles 150 and 110 as the constitutional obstacle, is reported from recent Iranian and regional press coverage and is the most recent and least settled material in this study.

On what is not attempted. This study makes no claim to original historical research in Iranian or Islamic history, which it enters as a visitor and in which it relies on the reference and analytical literature. Its contribution is analytical: to score a single case against a structural framework, to record what the case gives the framework, and — in Part X — to state plainly the framework prediction that this case has so far falsified. Several of its claims concern a living political order whose succession has not occurred, and are provisional in the way the project's own epistemics require.